

Promising Practice: HPOG Student Orientations
Suffolk County Department of Labor
Project SCHOOL (Suffolk County Health Occupational Opportunity for Learning)

The Suffolk County Department of Labor (SCDOL) holds an extensive orientation for students in its Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. During that one-day orientation, students' barriers are assessed and all program opportunities are presented to students.

Orientation meetings are held in groups of approximately 25 individuals on an as-needed basis, shortly before students begin their HPOG-funded training programs. At orientation, students are introduced to their support team, composed of SCDOL and licensing and consumer affairs counselors whose primary objective is to provide supportive services to students in a positive, cooperative problem-solving effort. The team ensures that everything possible is done to make students' school lives both rewarding and successful.

It is a fact that students are most successful when there is a strong spirit of cooperation between home, school, and community. Based on this shared responsibility, the support team meets with students to explore possibilities and strategies that will best meet their educational needs. Attendance at this meeting is mandatory and a very important step to a cohesive team effort to achieve a positive outcome to the incredible opportunity the Department of Labor Project SCHOOL offers participants.

In agreeing to take part in the HPOG program, students also agree to the following terms:

- Arrange transportation to and from the training site and/or during internship placement.
- Be prompt and maintain regular attendance at school and/or during internship placement.
- Call appropriate school and/or internship placement personnel if late or absent for any reason.
- Arrive dressed appropriately at school and/or during internship placement.
- Maintain high academic and training standards.
- Obey all rules and regulations at school and/or during internship placement.
- Communicate openly with school coordinator or SCDOL Project SCHOOL counselor concerning any problems, concerns, or conditions that are interfering with progress at school or during internship placement.
- Attend all meetings or activities, whether scheduled on site at school or at SCDOL, to promote or monitor student progress.
- After completion of training, all inquiries from either the school or SCDOL Project SCHOOL regarding a student's employment status must be answered. If students secure employment during training, they must advise SCDOL/Project SCHOOL counselor.

The atmosphere upheld during the orientation and support team meetings is one of personal

responsibility and inspiration. Staff use meaningful quotes to help students aspire to their greater selves and accomplish their goals, and they give students tips to succeeding and overcoming barriers. The combination of the student support team, positive atmosphere, and clear directives gives the students every opportunity to succeed in their goals. This scheduled orientation period sets a positive tone for the remainder of enrollment in the HPOG program.

Promising Practice: WIA and TANF Collaboration
Suffolk County Department of Labor

The Suffolk County Health Occupational Opportunity for Learning (SCHOOL) HPOG program has been successful in identifying, recruiting, and training TANF recipients because of the foundation provided by the strong institutional relationship between the Suffolk County Department of Labor (DOL) and the County Department of Social Services (DSS).

All employable individuals who receive services through DSS, including many TANF recipients, are referred to the Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEP), the County's welfare-to-work initiative. The SWEP program, which administers work requirements for DSS, is housed and operated at DOL. DOL and DSS use a system of assessment, referral, and tracking to coordinate the program. This has led to a strong institutional relationship between the two agencies and a shared knowledge base among their staffs. SCHOOL staff are cross-trained to understand both TANF and WIA regulations. They bring prior experience as TANF case managers and job specialists with awareness of the capacities and limitations of the population served under HPOG. Additionally, this cross-training lends itself to providing participants with the range of support services that are needed for retention and completion of the SCHOOL program.

With this pre-existing relationship, SCHOOL staff can draw upon a broad range of training providers for HPOG participants who have worked with TANF recipients previously. This range of trainers includes Eastern Suffolk BOCES, Western Suffolk BOCES, Suffolk Community College, Hunter Business School, and Long Island Education Opportunity Center.

An additional resource of the SCHOOL program, as a result of this interagency coordination, is the ability of SCHOOL participants to utilize the county's One Stop Centers which can offer job placement assistance and career guidance by SCHOOL and DOL staff. These joint sets of services between DOL and the local TANF office are also effective in leveraging HPOG funds against other community resources.

The SCHOOL program credits clear communication in both directions between DSS and DOL, and clear mutually agreed on objectives and processes with the success of the relationship, which has helped the program effectively serve its HPOG participants.